

VE<sup>Z</sup>乃木  
若葉は勇者  
であるSILENT  
WORLD原作：イカスト・空中弦彩  
監修：Project 2H企画監修・シリーズ構成：  
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・ランド-0-著：田中ロリ子  
キャラクター原案・監修：sahom  
挿絵：大岩ケンジ

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タカヒロ（みなとそふと）  
執筆：朱白あおい  
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著：ごお  
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DENGEKI G's

## NOVEL

電撃G's magazine 2016年2月号付録  
[ DENGEKI G's NOVEL ]

MAISHA RECORD DEPARTMENT • MAISHA-SAMA

**CENSORED**

I'm happy that we got a vacation.

There are lots of books I wanted to read.

Still

The fact that from now on, there was a possibility for a special  to be .

It makes me a bit sad.

Hero Record Jan 2019 AD

Iyojima Anzu's Record

# 第六話

禍根

## 乃木若葉は 勇者である

企画原案・シリーズ構成／

タカヒロ (みなとそふと)

執筆／朱白あおい

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バーテックスデザイン／D.K&JW WORKS

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vol.6

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## Chapter 6: Root of evil

- "Mmm~...I can feel it in my bones"

Under the night sky, Wakaba let out a deep sigh as she took a dip in the open-air bath.

Next to her, Hinata let out a bitter smile.

- "Wakaba-chan, you sound like an old man"

- "Mmm... This must be the magic of Onsen... Ohh the sound of Seto's waves~ Envelop this mine body~ Embrace the blade in my heart~"

Wakaba's singing voice echoed through the air. Hinata watched over her childhood friend enjoying the bath with a gentle smile.

The year has ended, it was now early January.

The girls came to visit the Onsen at Takamatsu city.

The city was the biggest in Kagawa, as well as being the primary onsen destination in Shikoku. The inland area contains several hot-spring villages that have been frequented ever since the Edo period for their therapeutic qualities.

The coastal area also had several natural springs.

Following every battle, the Miko's oracle would predict that there wouldn't be any more attacks for a while. As such, the heroes had a hot spring Inn reserved for them as part of their vacation. Needless to say, Hinata came along as well.

Wakaba was making a slack expression, unlike her usual self when the onsen door suddenly opened. Tamako, followed by Yuuna, Anzu and Chikage were standing there.

- "Ah! I knew you went in ahead of us. Tama wanted to go first!"

With Tamako pointing her finger at her, Wakaba replied without getting out of the bath.

- "You said~... You wanted to explore the Inn and went running around, that was your fault Tamako~"

- "Uwa, what a face you're making. Alright, I might have missed going in first but third place is mine!!"

- "Tamacchi-senpai, don't run in here"

Completely ignoring Anzu's warning, Tamako jumped into the bath.

- "Haa~..."

Anzu let out a sigh.

Following Tamako; Yuuna, Chikage and Anzu also went in the water.

The whole group was here. While few in numbers, this felt like a field trip.

Tamako approached Hinata, and said while rubbing her hands.

- "Alrighty, time for your mandatory body check. Show it to me all, exactly how much your body has developed since the last measurements back in spring"

- "Ah, um; Tamako-san, what are you...?"

Sensing the imminent danger, Hinata backed away.

Wakaba and Anzu stood in front of Tamako, protecting Hinata.

- "Tamako! I can see your intentions clearly. You're not laying a finger on Hinata!"

- "Tamacchi-senpai, Onsen are not a place for body inspections"

Tamako flinched.

But at that moment, her eyes switched targets to Anzu's body.

- "Anzu...Now that I look at it, you've been growing as well"

- "Eh?"

- "UNFORGIVABLE!"

Tamako jumped at Anzu; touching her all over.

Yuuna looked at the two with a troubled face; and as if she remembered something, she asked the group.

- "By the way everyone, did the doctors find any irregularities after your exams?"

- "Irregularities...?"

Chikage asked dubiously.

- "Yeah, you know how they've been examining us after every battle. I was just wondering if you all were okay. After I had used Ichimokuren I was told it was just piled up fatigue. After that I was fine"

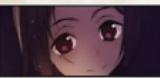
The heroes were having their bodies examined regularly at a medical facility. Since the Vertex attacks began, it happened after every battle. There were still many mysteries when it came to what effects using their powers had on their bodies.

Tamako ceased her assault on Anzu, and declared proudly.

- "Tama is in perfect health. The dislocated shoulder from that time healed so fast they praised me for it"

- "Haa...ha...I...I'm fine as well. I used to get sick a lot in the past, but that hasn't happened in a while now. it must be thanks to Shinju-sama's blessing"

Anzu said while catching her breath, after she's finally been released from Tamako's grapple.



- "No irregularities here either, I've only suffered minor scratches during battle anyways"

- "I can confirm that. I would be the first to find out if something were wrong with Wakaba-chan"

Hinata made her declaration following Wakaba's words.

- "I see, that's good. What about you Gun-chan?"

So far, Yuuna and Chikage have been the only two who used the power to call faeries. And as such, they have been undergoing a lot more exams than the rest.

- "I'm...Fine. They said there were no problems...I have to kill plenty more Vertex...I can't be falling to injury or sickness"

Chikage said with a quiet voice, but her strong will carried through it.

She changed, Wakaba thought to herself.

Back then, Chikage displayed no interest in taking part in their hero activities. "Why should I put myself in danger by fighting?" Was what she would say, discontent.

Just what caused her to change so much?

-(If I remember correctly, it was around the time of second battle)

Wakaba had no idea what might have transpired during that period.

For now, Chikage had a strong sense of duty. She performed very well during both training and real fights.

Perhaps, one recent event might have caused that change.

During new year's day, festivities were held where the heroes would show up in their battle outfits and be display them before the citizens. Bundles of straw and such were set up to look like Vertex, the heroes would then strike them down with their weapons.

People from all over Shikoku gathered to see them.

It appeared to be a simple festival-like event, but it aimed to strengthen the people's faith in the heroes; as the hope of mankind.

Taisha's objective was well achieved.

The heroes who took part were Wakaba, Tamako and Chikage. Yuuna and Anzu sat out as they didn't feel confident they could perform in front of so many people.

Considering Tamako's fearless personality and the fact that she liked to stand out, she of course was up to the task. What Wakaba thought was unusual was Chikage's desire to participate as well.

The old Chikage would have definitely refused; the fact that she didn't was probably due to the change that occurred inside her.

Wakaba stood out the most during the performance. As the leader, she stood at the front and was rather well-recognized. But most of all, her Iai style was well suited to this sort of show, and looked the most graceful fighting imaginary enemies.

The performance was aired on TV, and seeing how it focused on Wakaba the most, Tamako complained how it was unfair, but Chikage silently compared her minor appearances to Wakaba's and took notes on the key differences.

- (Chikage might have the strongest sense of duty out of all of us here...)

Wakaba still in the bath thought while staring at Chikage, who then noticed her and gave her a dubious look.

- "What are you staring at...?"

- "...I was just thinking that you were a hero, Chikage..."

Wakaba meant no harm, but her words must have rubbed Chikage the wrong way who frowned as she said.

- "Obviously...Aren't you the same...?"

Being confronted with the question, Wakaba wondered.

She certainly had a strong sense of duty as well.

However.

She got the feeling she wasn't as conforming to her position as well as Chikage.

- "Haa~ That hit the spot"

Back in their room, having just eaten dinner Tamako rolled on the tatami floor.

- "You'll turn into a cow if you sleep right after eating Tamachi-senpai"

- "That's exactly what I'm going for. I wanna be big and strong as a cow. Like a fighting bull of Uwajima"

- "That's not the kind of cow you'll turn into..."

Tamako paid no attention to Anzu's retort.

- "That was an extravagant meal. I dread finding out how much it cost though"

Yuuna was right, the meal they have been served was like nothing they ever ate. exquisite and High grade ingredients were used without moderation.

Hinata made a pondering face as she wondered.

- "This must be a special treatment for us Heroes. Back in the Marugame castle, all kinds of things were sent addressed to "The venerated heroes". Food as well as high quality crafts and the such..."



- "Yeah, At first I thought they were some sort of advertisement or propaganda gifts...But that wasn't it"

They were most likely gifts sent out of pure gratitude, Wakaba thought. As a matter of fact, most of the gifts were sent by individuals or other bodies who would benefit nothing from advertisement.

- "Speaking of which, the fact that we had this Inn reserved all to ourselves was quite the gift in itself"

Anzu displayed a troubled smile in response to Tamako's words.

- "I get the feeling only the greatest of politicians or the most famous artists get such extraordinary treatment"

- "This is only natural...What we're doing is far more important...Than a politician or an artist"

Chikage said, indifferent.

But Wakaba was still not used to all of this.

Her reason for fighting was to get revenge for all the people who were hurt or killed. Her blade was a means of payback for all the pain mankind suffered at the hands of the Vertex.

Every deed is worthy of retribution. That was the way of life of the Nogi.

She never asked for this, nor even imagined it. She actually felt a little bad about it.

- "Now then, we've taken a bath, eaten dinner but it's still too early to go to bed. Wanna play a game?"

Tamako stood up.

- "A game? I thought this might happen so I brought Shougi"

Hinata took a small shougi board out of her bag, the portable kind that's sold in toy stores.

- "Hina-chan so cool. I on the other hand brought cards."

Yuuna took out a deck of cards.

- "If you're looking for a game...it's right there..."

Chikage pointed towards the TV. Under it was a game console and collection of newly released games.

- "We could also play Mafia. All we'd need are a pen and paper and the smartphone app"

Anzu suggested.

- "We'll play them all. Tama will win at everything"

Tamako couldn't win at everything.

In fact, the one winning the most was Chikage. Chikage was unbeatable.

Be it videogames, Shougi, cards Mafia. No one could stand up to her.



- "Gun-chan, amazing!"

Yuuna's eyes were full of respect for Chikage. The latter looked expressionless, but her mouth was slightly twisted so much she was happy.

On the other hand, Anzu and Tamako who kept losing to her, lost all confidence and were curled up in the corner.

However, that situation would soon change.

Wakaba who didn't play a lot games and was unused to their nature was confused at first, but as she learned the ropes she was able to fight on equal foot with Chikage.

Right now they were playing a game of Spit. It was a duel between Wakaba and Chikage. The other 4 didn't stand a chance; Tamako and Anzu were back in their corner.

The game revolved around the speed at which you play your cards. Chikage who had played countless action and shooting games had great observation and situation assessment skills. On the other hand, Wakaba who practiced martial arts had otherworldly reflexes and concentration.

On a best of three, they were at one win each.

Both were holding their own.

- "I won't lose...Not to you..."

Chikage mumbled.

That was supposed to be nothing more than a manifestation of Chikage's fighting spirit. But Wakaba felt there was a deeper meaning to it.

However, from the battles thus far, Wakaba familiarized herself with Chikage's style.

This win was most likely hers.

The two made their move. Playing cards at speeds the eye could barely follow.

But Wakaba seemed to be slightly faster. She was gonna win.

- "Uhyaaaa~?!"

Wakaba let out a strange voice as she threw her cards in the air.

Hinata had snuck up and playfully bit her ear.

- "W-What are you doing, Hinata?!"

While that was happening, Chikage had finished playing all her cards.

- "Winner, Gun-chan!"



Yuuna raised Chikage's hand, as Hinata said scolding Wakaba.

- "That's no good Wakaba-chan. It's just a game so don't go making such a scary face. Just have fun"

- "S-still...T-that was ticklish...!"

Wakaba still blushing, Straightened up while still watching our for Hinata.

- "Fufufu; I know of all your weaknesses Wakaba-chan"

- "What? Wakaba's weakness you said?"

- "Could it be? Are you ticklish Wakaba-san?"

Tamako and Anzu who were in the corner suddenly stood up with a gleam in their eyes. This was their chance for revenge.

- "Let's go Anzu! A coordinated attack!"

- "Leave it to me!"

They attacked her from both sides, aiming for her armpits and started tickling.

- "Tickle her to death!"

- "Yes! take this and this and this..."

- "....."

Wakaba was cool as a cucumber.

- ".....Tickle her to death!"

- ".....Yes! take this and this and this..."

- "....."

Wakaba did not even flinch.

- "huh?!"

Surprised that their attempts had absolutely no effect, Tamako and Anzu were in shock.

- "Fu, fu, fu, fu, fu..."

Wakaba looked down on the two. A smile on her face, but her eyes were serious.

Tamako and Anzu's faces stiffened. Right now. At this very moment. They knew they needed to get away from Wakaba or else. But they were too late. They could no longer move.

- "Tamako...Anzu...I hope you're prehyauuu~!"

Wakaba was sitting down, her face red as a tomato. Behind her Hinata had just blown into her ear.

- "Wakaba-chan's weak point is right here. It's her ear"

She gently bit her ear again causing her to let out another "Hyaaa~..." and collapse on the tatami floor like jellyfish.

Tamako and Anzu were dumbfounded looking at the two interact.

Hinata's lips pulled away from Wakaba who was completely unable to move.

- "Now then, If we kept playing the same games Chikage-san and Wakaba-chan would dominate again, and that's no fun. So I propose we play something different"

- "Something different?"

Yuuna tilted her head.

- "Yes. A new game that's been popular among young kids lately. "The Hero game""

The Hero Game.

A white stuffed cotton cloth would represent the Vertex. The players participating would be the Heroes. The players would throw the stuffed Vertex at each other. The recipient can then either dodge, strike it down with their hand or throw it back.

In other words...

- "That's just pillow fighting!"

Tamako said as white pillow flew across the room.

The girl who were currently occupying the largest room in the inn, split into two teams and were pillow fighting. Wakaba, Tamako and Chikage Vs. Yuuna, Anzu and Hinata. Both teams raised a low table behind which they were hiding as they fired at eachother.

- "Even if the core content remained the same, renewing interest in something simply by changing its name tells you a lot abou the world we live in"

- "It might be that...Some higher up somewhere...thought reviving it was a good idea for economic purposes..."

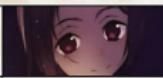
Wakaba and Chikage Calmly analyzed the situation as they threw pillows.

- "I don't like it one bit..."

Tamako expressed her discontent as she fired at the other team as well.

Both Teams gathered pillows from all over the Inn, so it was unlikely they would run out of ammunition any time soon.

- "At this rate the fight would never end. I'll go in and attack directly"



Glaring at the enemy barricade, Wakaba said.

On each side was a flag set up to represent Shinju-sama. Whichever team's gets knocked down is considered the loser.

- "You intend to dive right in the middle of the crossfire by yourself Wakaba?!"

- "They're only pillows. I can break through!"

Having said that, Wakaba jumped from behind the barricade.

- "Wakaba-chan is charging in!"

Hinata nodded at Yuuna's words.

- "That's just like her. The real fight starts here!"

Hinata's team fired relentlessly to protect their ground.

Wakaba dodged some of the pillows thrown at her, and parried others with her hand. Even if she got hit it would simply hurt a bit. It was no problem.

As she drew closer to her objective she dashed ahead and jumped over the table-barricade and above Hinata and the others. She extended her hand towards the flag.

---"Gotcha!"

Wakaba wondered. For some reason, two other voices overlapped with her own.

When she looked around, she noticed that Tamako and Chikage also had charged into the enemy camp.  
- "Why are you two here?!"

- "I'm not letting you take the credit. I'll be the one taking down their flag!"

- "Wrong...I will...!"

Completely forgetting they were on the enemy side, the three started arguing.

That's when Wakaba noticed. Anzu was nowhere to be seen.

- "?! Anzu! Where is Anzu..."

Right as she looked around searching for her.

- "I got the flag~!"

Anzu's voice echoed from the other side.

Surprised, Wakaba turned around only to see Anzu standing in their camp with the flag in her hand. Hinata grinned.

- "Anzu-san snuck past you as you all charged at our camp"

Wakaba, Tamako and Chikage were dumbfounded as Anzu shook the flag in the distance.

- "I used the "Thirty-six stratagems" as a reference, mainly 'sneak through the passage of Chencang' and 'Slough off the cicada's golden shell'"

It looks like Anzu was the one who came up with the strategy.

After the game, everyone went back to their room and fell asleep immediately.

Wakaba, stood by the window with the lights still off as she looked down on the city.

As you would expect from a big city like Takamatsu, even this late at night the lights were still on.

Each of these tiny lights was a beacon of life.

Across the city was the sea, soaked in darkness. The "wall" protecting Shikoku could be seen in the distance.

It's been 3 years and a few months since Shikoku got cut off from the mainland.

What has the world beyond the wall turned to?

What has become of Nagano with whom contact was lost?

What of Shiratori...

- "Wakaba-chan"

When she turned around to where the voice came from, Hinata was standing there.

- "Sorry, did I wake you up?"

- "No, I also couldn't sleep"

Hinata sat on the chair next to the window.

- "Were you watching the sea?"

- "Yeah. Even away from the Marugame castle I can't seem to shake off this habit"

Just like how she couldn't forget about that day three years ago.

Just like how she couldn't forget about the world beyond the wall.

Wakaba stares across the Seto sea at least once a day.

- "...Wakaba-chan"

- "What?"

- "I think it'd be better if you spent more time looking around you. At the people close to you."

- "What's that supposed to mean?"



-"Just today..."

Hinata's words cut off mid sentence. Due to the room being dark, Wakaba couldn't tell what sort of face she was making.

-"...never mind. This is something you yourself ought to notice."

Hinata stood up and went back to her futon.

-"You should go to sleep as well Wakaba-chan. staying up late is bad for you"

Wakaba would soon know the meaning of the words Hinata said that night.

-"...there's too much of them"

Wakaba made a stern face, looking at the map displayed on her smartphone screen.

The attack occurred about half a month after they returned to Marugame castle. The number of Vertex displayed on the screen was unusually high this time around.

-"This is...over 10 times as much as usual, maybe more"

Yuuna mumbled while looking at her phone. A hint of tension could be felt in her voice.

In the past, only a hundred or so Vertex would show up at once; but this time there appeared to be over a thousand.

The heroes were used to fighting by now and would have no problem defeating individual Vertex. But with this much attacking at once, the situation was completely different.

-(No. As a leader I can't be showing a weakness now.)

Wakaba stared at the swarm approaching, and gripped her Katana tightly.

-"I'll go on ahead"

If there are 10 times more enemies, we'll just have to defeat that much- no, even more.

Wakaba leaped toward the swarm.

-"Wait, Wakaba-sa..."

By the moment Anzu spoke up, Wakaba already started moving.

She rushed toward the swarm and destroyed several Vertex as she jumped in the midst of it.

The Vertex seeing Wakaba running in alone, started gathering around her.

That's when the rest of the Heroes noticed their irregular behavior.

-"What's the meaning of this? they're not coming this way?"

It was just like Tamako said. All of the Vertex' attention switched to Wakaba.

The Vertex who attacked humans instinctively, have so far viewed the heroes as equal "threats" when they attacked. That might have been arrogance on their part. The fact that they could still exterminate the humans on a full frontal attack as they're the superior and stronger beings.

But they too possessed intelligence.

As they kept losing, they started adopting battle tactics as well.

Anzu seeing the entire swarm gather around Wakaba yelled.

- "They intend of defeating Wakaba-san first...!"

There were so many enemies that they completely blocked Wakaba's line of sight. She was completely cut off from the other heroes.

Wherever she looked, all she could see was those white abominations. But Wakaba never panicked, nor thought of retreating.

-(This isn't enough to make me waver)

A lot of people were killed by these monsters. Innocent people, young people, people with loved ones, people who earnestly lived their lives. Countless people had their lives taken for no reason.

The scene from that day was etched into Wakaba's mind.

The countless bodies torn apart. The destroyed homeland. The peaceful days lost. The people running away like fugitives. The screams of sadness and anger.

- (I will have them pay for that!!)

The other heroes didn't just stand there. The four of them rushed to help Wakaba, but at that moment the enemy made another move.

Part of the Vertex surrounding Wakaba split off and headed towards the tree.

- "This is bad..."

Chikage expressed her frustration looking at the current situation.

The "part" that split off was as much as all five would usually fight together, due to the huge number that invaded this time around. And the moment the tree falls, it's all over.

The Heroes would feel pressured to prioritize saving the tree over going to Wakaba's aid.

- "Wakaba-chan..."

Wakaba or the tree. Yuuna made a pained expression as she wondered.

However, they didn't really have a choice.

The tree had behind it the lives of everyone in Shikoku.

They headed towards the swarm that rushed for the tree.



- "Wakaba!! Come this way!! Don't fight by yourself, we have to stay together!!"

Tamako yelled while moving away from Wakaba.

Being completely focused as always, It was unclear if that voice reached her.

Wakaba was fighting so many at once, despite her superior abilities and the powers from the Tree; her stamina wasn't endless, and as such was being overwhelmed slowly.

The moment she lost her concentration due to being exhausted, 3 Vertex lunged at her from the left, right and above.

- "Haa!"

She cut two of them in one swing, but the one on the right side managed to slip through. She tried dodging out of the way but it got a hold of her Right arm holding the blade.

- "Gua...aaa!"

The teeth-like organs broke through the skin and chomped on her arm, as they tore through her blood vessels a sharp pain coursed through her brain, almost causing her to faint.

However, this was the pain of all the people murdered by the Vertex.

No, compared to the people torn apart, eaten alive and eventually killed. This much pain was nothing.

- "Just how much pain and suffering did you monsters inflict on innocent people?!!"

Wakaba switched the blade to her left hand and cut the Vertex still holding onto her right in two. In her rage she continuously slashed any that approached her.

She fought like a fierce god. Hatred and rage burning in her eyes. Each time she swung her blade, blood would gush out from her right arm.

However, in face of the overwhelming numbers, it was starting to become clear. Wakaba was so focused on the enemies in front of her, she couldn't sense the giant monster approaching from behind.....

- "Wakaba-chan!"

The one who saved her was Yuuna. She suddenly appeared in the midst of the swarm and started holding them off instead of Wakaba.

- "Uwaa!"

Yuuna was sent flying and crashed on the giant roots, and immediately a large number of Vertex started heading towards her.

- "Yuuna!!"

Wakaba cut down the swarm attacking Yuuna, picked her up and jumped away from the enemy.

- "Thanks...Wakaba-chan"

Yuuna smiled faintly, but her body was already filled with injuries. Her battle outfit torn in different places and her left arm and right leg soaked in her own blood. That wasn't due to the blow from before, no. She had already fought countless enemies before she jumped in to help Wakaba.

- "Why...did you come here?!"

Wakaba's style was to jump in first, take on as much enemies as possible and deal with them. She didn't need support nor someone to fight alongside her, however.

- "...I just couldn't abandon a friend..."

Yuuna said as she got up on her feet.

Wakaba had forgotten. Yuuna was the kind of girl who would never sit and watch someone else suffer. She knew she wouldn't be able to convince her to get away by herself. Now that it came to this, Wakaba took her Katana in hand and faced her back to Yuuna's.

- "...Yuuna, You better survive"

- "You too Wakaba-chan...It's fine...We're all strong after all...!"

Shrugging away the pain and fatigue, Yuuna clenched her fist.

The two charged at the countless Vertex around them.

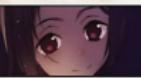
It was a fight like they've never experienced before. The battle that took place during the frozen time lasted for over six hours.

The heroes eventually managed to take down all the Vertex.

But they all had suffered rather heavy injuries.

Especially Yuuna who was rushed into a Taisha hospital immediately.





After the forestization had reverted, and Yuuna was carried out of the Marugame castle.

Wakaba had just been slapped by Chikage.

- "Nogi-san... Why did you do something to rash...?"

Feeling the heat on her cheek, Wakaba stood there silent.

- "It's because you tried to fight by yourself like that... That Yuuna-san was...!"

Tamako and Anzu said nothing as they watched the two.

Unsure if they should intervene. Somewhere deep inside, they knew Chikage was speaking the truth. If Chikage weren't yelling at Wakaba right now, Tamako would probably have done so instead.

- "Running in by yourself... And putting Yuuna-san in such danger...! You could have at least used to power of a faerie, maybe then it would lessen the burden on Yuuna-san... But you didn't even have the decency to do that...!"

Chikage's words were undeniable. Wakaba couldn't talk back.

- (It was all... Due to my misjudgment and conceit...)

Because she rushed in by herself. Because she went into what could be described as a frenzy, Yuuna ended up in that state.

The fact that she didn't call forth the power of faeries was because that fighting style was unsuited for long battles due to the extreme backlash. But that decision also was so she could defeat at least one more enemy. if she had done it, it would have definitely spared Yuuna a lot of pain.

- "You... You're not even looking at your surroundings...! You need to be more self-aware of your position as a leader...!!"

The question that she once asked herself; If she really were fit to lead the group, once again appeared in her mind.

The cold and heavy winter sky extended atop the heroes' heads.

Chapter 6 - End.